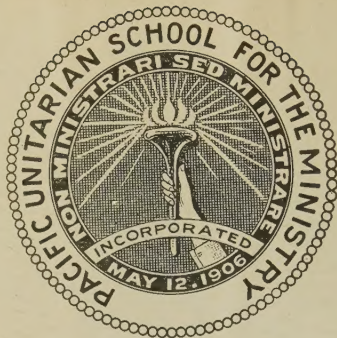


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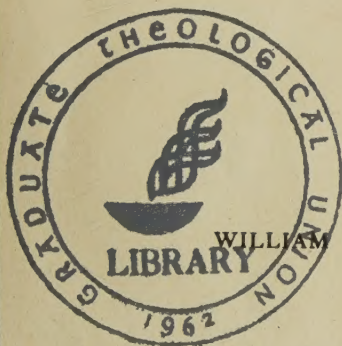
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THE HOUSEHOLD ALTAR  
IN  
HOMES OF THE LIBERAL FAITH TODAY



BY

WILLIAM C. GANNETT

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W. L. GANNETT

Cambridge, Mass.  
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This pamphlet goes with friendly greeting from the writer. It is long, and you may not care to read all of it; but will you read Dr. Crothers' words on the first page, and the postscript on the last page, and perhaps look over the outline at the beginning? And may I add a word to explain why I send it?

Among those who hold our Liberal Faith there are signs of quickening interest in personal religious experience and of a new zeal for "Liberal Evangelism." Far more important than anything else in religion is the personal experience. There lie the sources of any Evangel we may have; and till we have such experience in rich abundance, our spiritual outflow into the community can not be large. But between the individual and the community is the Home. My paper deals only with this intermediate—the Home. Can either of the two resurrection movements that are stirring within us today have wide and lasting results unless there be a third—*a deepening religiousness in the Homes where the children of our faith are brought up and its ministers ought to be born?* For nearly the whole hundred years since Channing's young days when the break came with Calvinism, has not Household Religiousness been the "missing link" in our Unitarianism? and may not this omission be one of the principal reasons why it has accomplished so much less than our fathers hoped? For three generations we have steadily neglected the very birth-place and nursery of strength, whence our loyal workers should come. If we can not make our own children care for "religiousness", and are losing power to raise our own ministers, what inevitably follows,—and ought to?

So what is *your* answer to the question that Dr.



Crothers puts into friendly Orthodox lips? And how do *you* get away from that "sequence" in the post-script? Is it not really a very important matter, and one in which ministers, above all others, should be earnestly and actively interested? Perhaps my own suggestions hark back too much to old ways; and they certainly are limited in scope. What are the better suggestions? What do you and your neighbor-ministers think about it? What do the more thoughtful fathers and mothers in your church-circle think?

I am not forgetting the tumult and sorrow amid which we are living today. But does that make this quiet subject untimely just now? Is it ever untimely—Religiousness in Home-life? Or can religiousness ever be more needed than today and during the generation of problems and reconstructions after the War? Shall the neglect in our Homes continue till Peace comes, or shall we parents of today begin reconstruction right here and now with ourselves and our children? Shall we not fit them by deepened religiousness to take larger part in shaping the Great New Morrow of the world according to the ideals of our Liberal Faith?

The paper is sent to all settled Unitarian ministers on our Year-Book list. I ask for no answer,—am only venturing questions, hoping to waken or widen interest in the matter, and trusting your good-will to pardon this rather unusual way of pressing it on your attention. The pamphlet needs no acknowledgment at all.

WILLIAM C. GANNETT.

3 Berkeley Place, Cambridge, Mass.  
May, 1917.





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# THE HOUSEHOLD ALTAR

## IN

### HOMES OF THE LIBERAL FAITH TODAY

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## I

### THE SUNSET OF RELIGIOUSNESS IN OUR HOMES

Dr. Crothers was saying not long ago, in the *Christian Register*, that "Liberalism in religion is no longer a theory. It is old enough to bear fruit, and henceforth by its fruit it will be judged. Most people are no longer shocked at its principles; neither, on the other hand, do they listen with eager credulity to its promises. The time for all that has passed. They are critical of *results*. 'These are fine phrases,' they say; 'you have been repeating them for a generation, but what fine actions, what heroic achievements, have come out of them? For instance, it is pleasant to know that you believe in human brotherhood, but how do your churches differ in actual brotherliness from those creed-bound organizations whose narrowness you eloquently rebuke? That is an admirable suggestion of yours, though it no longer strikes us as novel, that the emphasis should be shifted from the death of Jesus to his life, and that his life can be studied in the



lives of those inspired by his spirit; how successful are you in developing such lives, and how far do you find the teachings of Jesus practicable? You assert that religion is a natural growth: this seems a very reasonable supposition. How far have you been able to adapt your methods to the real processes of nature? *From your homes and your Sunday schools do the children grow naturally into a happy and yet serious religious life,—or do they drift into indifference?* You say that a free and rational religion is infinitely attractive: do you find the ministry of such a religion becoming more and more attractive to the ablest and most earnest of your young men?"—Thus far Dr. Crothers.

These are pertinent and biting questions. The last but one I venture to italicize—the answer to it covering the last one, also,—because it happens to be the question we are to consider: Do the Homes of the Liberal Faith tend to make our children brought up in them religious; or, under their influence, do the children drift into indifference? Thinking carefully and speaking frankly, how would *you* answer this question?

The Liberal Faith in America, so far as it is "Unitarian" in name, is almost exactly one hundred years old,—the open break with the Calvinism of the forefathers and the reluctant acceptance of the name of heresy having occurred in 1815. Liberal Orthodoxy, which also has good right to the adjective, is of course younger than that. But the two are parts of one broad and broadening movement of thought. For both parts my own answer

to our question would be: The first hundred years of the Liberal Faith have witnessed a long slow sunset of religiousness in our Homes; of necessity our children are showing effects of the chill.

A hundred years ago personal prayer, family prayers, Bible-reading by oneself and in the family group, grace at the meals, church-going by the elders with the little ones by their side, were the regular incidents of family life, expressions of the religiousness that really pervaded the life. I am neither praising nor condemning,—only describing. For good or for ill these ways were household habits; and the impress of household habits sinks deep into a child. The Sunday school was at that time barely invented, but in the more earnest Homes the children learnt the Shorter Westminster Catechism by heart, and the pastor on his round of parish calls would examine them on it. In general parents felt responsibility for the religiousness as well as for the honesty, industry and manners, or the reading, writing and arithmetic of their children. One hundred years is three generations: through the first generation many of these customs of household religion survived; in the second they were vanishing; today they have all but died out, and as yet nothing effective has risen in the modern home to take their place. The mother of today has probably taught her child in its nursery some little prayers and hymns. Perhaps, but rarely now, the child joins in a quiet moment at household meals. Probably he has never heard the Bible or a Bible's equivalent read in the household circle, or seen it read much, if at all, in private. Perhaps, but not

probably now, on Sunday afternoons the mother or father spends an earnest hour or two with the children. The mother may still go frequently to church; the father, quite as likely, but seldom,—in good weather the golf-links may claim him, in bad weather he burrows in the big Sunday newspaper; and the child, until in the teens, is supposed to have all the church that is healthy for it in going to Sunday school. It is still a good home to be born in, this home of the Liberal Faith,—good in many respects; but so far as responsibility for the religiousness of the children is concerned, *the parents have abdicated*. Some one says that in the modern home the daily bath has taken the place of the morning prayer. It is better for hygiene,—is it for holiness, for character? The modern liberal parent seems to reply, "Cleanliness comes before Godliness, and one will suffice."

---

This sunset of religiousness is by no means confined to Unitarian homes, nor to those of Liberal Orthodoxy. But it is probably most marked in homes of the Liberal Faith, and doubtless the liberalizing has much to do with it. The loosening of creed-bonds; the transfer of emphasis in religion from belief to character, and from personal to social salvation; the new conception of the Bible, assigning its origin to inward and natural, instead of outward and miraculous sources; the changing relations of religion and science; the change in the thought of God from transcendence to immanence



in Nature, history and soul; the recognition of "evolution" as key to the past and present and future of all things, including religion itself,—this rise of a whole new set of religious ideas accepted, but hardly yet "realized," by the mind, and by no means yet assimilated by the heart, must *needs* for a while chill feeling and check its expression. For a movement like this begins in the intellect, the heart following slowly. Slowly, *but surely*. From the beginning it has been movement from outward to inward, from material to spiritual, from mechanical to vital, from the local and limited to the universal: the Liberal Faith will yet, will inevitably, come to its glow and its worship. But the sunset is no less a fact because a sunrise is to come.

Our sunset, however, is far too wide-spread a phenomenon for this cause alone to explain. The chill is over the whole modern Home. A second cause is plainly the increasing rush and tension of life. Was Wordsworth forlorn, and men out of tune with Nature a hundred years ago? Far more than in Wordsworth's day is it true that

"The World is too much with us: late and soon,  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers."

It is a world daily more splendid as well as more tragic to live in, and we are too busy with things of its splendor and tragedy and with the things of the body that revels and aches in it, to give time as in simpler and quieter days to the cloistered things of the spirit. Certainly there are many more *uncloistered* things of the spirit today than in the old time, for a great deal of the idealism then

expressing itself in worship and church ways now finds outlet in forms of social aspiration and service. Account this a change for the better,—it is; we are really more *in* tune with everything; yet it leaves, even adds to, the tension and rush and competition and preoccupation of life. Call it a kind of unconscious religiousness,—it is. But our sunset is no less real in the skies of *conscious* religiousness.

A third cause, of which less has been said, though it is probably more causative than either of these, lies broadly out among the tremendous social forces that are reshaping civilization. The blessings of civilization *cost*. Three of the four great social movements that made the nineteenth century the most wonderful century of human development seems to be costing mankind—*the Home!* The new Industrialism that began in the early decades of the century, the Emancipation of Woman that dates from its middle, the Socializing Tendency that so strongly marked its close,—each one of these movements has made directly for disintegration of the Home. The new Industrialism swept the population from country to city, the family from the separate cottage to the tenement and on towards the slum; and then, through the long hours of the day, pushed unmarried women, and often the married, and even the children, out of their remnant of home into factories, to become “hands” to the clicking and clanging machines. The Emancipation which has secured to woman her property, her children, her higher education, scores of new occupations, and at last is securing for her the vote,—which, in short, has given her control of her own personality as never

before,—this Emancipation, which certainly tends to make her a nobler woman, wife and mother, and thereby to ennoble the home, as certainly is lessening her predestination to be a house-mother and home-maker, is begetting restlessness in marriage relations, and is greatly increasing divorce. The Socializing Tendencies of the new day are stripping the parent of many an ancient function as protector, provider, promoter of family life, the community taking them over,— and, be it said, doing parts of the job so much better than the average parent that the Child also is coming into his rights as never before. It is the age of the Woman, the age of the Child, the age of the Common People. Manifestly a higher civilization; and, whatever the rebates, we can but rejoice at the expansion, enrichment and uplift of life. But the cost of the gain has been disintegration of the Home,—of the basis of civilization as hitherto we have known it. I do not say its ruin or its abolition. It may all be part of a process by which the Home is to re-integrate itself in nobler form than before. “Nothing is quickened save it die.” But while the quickening waits, the dying may well make us thoughtful.— This sobering fact, which has nothing to do with “faith,” is probably the main cause of our sunset. The Home itself is undergoing immense transformation: naturally the religiousness that illumined and ennobled the old Home has been profoundly affected. It has all but disappeared, and as yet no new form of religiousness has appeared there in its place.

---



But in that same decade which brought Unitarianism to its name something appeared outside of the Home, that tried, and is still trying, to act *for* the Home in this matter,—the Sunday school. The Sunday school is just about as old as the sunset. The parents have abdicated, I said: it takes a phrase as startling as that to suggest the change in relations of parent and child which the hundred years have produced in the American Home. It is abdication in regard to three vital concerns of the child,—mental training, which the parent has surrendered to the public school teacher; religious training, which he has surrendered to the Sunday school teacher; and the choice of companions and amusements and books, which he seems to be more and more willing to surrender to the child himself.

The religious training has been taken over by the Sunday school: let us look at this would-be substitute for the Home.

Reverence and honor and gratitude and praise to the Sunday school teacher! She is one of the unappreciated angels of modern society. She—for *he* is almost always a woman—is a kindly, devoted hand-maiden of God; perhaps religious in temperament, perhaps only ethical; seldom trained in the fine art of teaching, or versed in the subjects she tries to make interesting; rather a picker-up of her lesson week by week, but faithfully giving the best she knows to the high task she has undertaken. Often this teacher, to whom two parents with grey in their hair have turned over their child to get its early religious impressions, is an earnest-hearted girl of twenty, with nearly all of life's deeper les-

sons yet to be learnt by herself. Under her smile, for twenty to thirty-five minutes on a Sunday, the child "studies Bible lessons," as the process is called; and for the rest of the hour sings hymns, reads responses, and listens to a little talk from the superintendent, all in a bright comradeship of boy and girl friends. Then the children go home to dinner, and Sunday school passes out of their minds and lives for a week.

Now this, as it is, is a good; and a good that is fast becoming a better. The teachers are training themselves, the manuals and methods improving, the service of worship enriching, the aim of the whole is defining itself. Our Sunday school merits increasing respect. It brings certain influences to bear on the child that are not in the power of the Home to give. Both as a school and as a children's church it has a great future. All the same, as a means of education and inspiration it is still in its earlier stages. Necessarily it began as a Bible School: the tradition that it must remain essentially a Bible school is stunting it now. For as usually taught in the schools of our land, the Bible itself, with all its advantages as a text-book, is stunting religious intelligence. Wonderful book as it is, it has no right today to the lone eminence on which the ignorant reverence of the past placed it. Even in schools of the Liberal Faith, where the facts are frankly told, long years are spent in teaching it: at their end is the child fond of the Bible? Does he know the way to its heights, where they lie? Does he visit them gladly in after-life? In teaching it, the school also teaches the ethics of noble living;

does it *so* teach them that the child is deeply impressed? Are effects of the school often traceable in his character? If the Sunday school exist for still a third purpose, the one we are considering now, to make the child's heart and life *religious*, what must we say of it then? Within the circuit of the Liberal Faith, at least, would not ministers, teachers, parents, the children themselves looking back to it, confess that for this end success seldom breaks the record of failure?

And the reason is plain. It is simply that for this last purpose the Sunday school at its best is but a make-shift, *not* a "substitute" in the sense of equivalent, for the Home. *Can* one hour a week in the class of five or ten playmates give the Soul of a child the nurture it needs? Achieve what can only be accomplished by small, repeated, half-unconscious impressions falling day after day, year after year? The little Soul's constitution is too complex and delicate, its wants are too individual, too many, too various, the task is too gradual and difficult, for anything like *that* to suffice. It is the parents' slowest and longest, in some ways their hardest, task that they are tossing off to the stranger. It is their highest and holiest function that they are abdicating. Sunday school teachers are sometimes saints in their influence, but were the teacher the archangel Gabriel himself and the school conditions made over into heaven's, no hour once a week could achieve the miracle. What, then, under conditions as they are?

The school can be no *substitute* for the Home; it is but a *supplement* to it. As such it is full of



promise, but only of promise as yet. And for its small success thus far as a supplement, the Home again is largely to blame. It has all but refused to second in any degree the efforts of its would-be substitute! The day-school is highly honored in the Home, and its efforts is seconded there,—the law looks to that: is the Sunday school even respected? Is it treated as having any real educational value? Where are the signs of respect? The parents, as a rule, know little or nothing about the lessons and show no interest in them. Some of them deliberately take the ground that the intellectual demands of the week on child-brains are too heavy to permit even fifteen minutes to be given to preparation for Sunday school. She teaches it religion,—this woman to whom is entrusted the Soul of their child at its most sensitive age: how many of the fathers can even tell us her name? She teaches it ethics in application to the child's life: has either father or mother ever counselled with her about their boy's character, ever asked her aid in their girl's problems? Or has it once occurred to them to *thank* her for taking their place and giving—did you ever figure it out?—giving how much of her time to their child? A minimum of two hours a week, one for preparation, one on the Sunday, amounts to eighty or ninety hours a year, that is, to ten full working days; and for the faithful teacher it is rain-or-shine, headache-or-health work, and often work without any sense of accomplishing good to reward her. Some of these teachers do not have as much vacation as ten working days in the year. And it has never occurred to many of us

that we owe gratitude for our child's share in those days! Quite possibly the parents allow the mood of the child to decide the question of going to school or staying at home on this or that Sunday. Not impossibly they even let the child's chums decide *what* school he shall attend!—since he must have mates to his liking, if he is willing and they allow him to go! And perhaps they allow his own wisdom—wisdom half-way through its teens—to decide when he has had enough religious instruction and may stop going altogether. Abdication complete,—the parents consenting, however, if no aid and no thanks are expected from them, to accept for a while the volunteered service of a substitute!—Do I exaggerate? Somewhat, I hope; but not very much. These are not uncommon conditions. They will change as, they cannot change till, the school gains in educational value and the Home regains a sense of responsibility. Under present conditions how *can* the Sunday school achieve great success?

## II

### THE SOUL OF A CHILD: IS CHARACTER WITHOUT RELIGIOUSNESS ALL THAT IT NEEDS?

Many an earnest parent is humbly conscious of inadequacy for the task of training the *Soul* of a child. For its body they feel responsibility; for its mind they find teachers; it is their duty to see to its character, and they try to. But for its religiousness, "What can *we* do?" And such a father to such a mother may say: "This is beyond us; we do not know how. The Sunday school may not succeed in it, either. But after all, what does it matter? If in our home our child secures a good character, then, religious or not, he has all that he needs." To this the right answer, I think, is both Yes and No.

*Yes*: for character—"Nature in its highest form," as Emerson called it—is the one and only essential. In value nothing compares with it. And nothing is so sure to generate character, good or bad, in children as character in parents. "I will take what Father takes," said the boy to the waiter who asked him at table in the hotel what he would have to drink. The father was wise enough, let us hope, to give up the wine then and there and forever. But more than what we parents do, it is what we *are*, that tells. No household ritual of religion, however helpful and dear it be, has such power to draw children towards the highest as steady loyalty to the highest on the part of the father and mother.

A home in which Right is the unquestioned law, the permanent "cause" of the days, in which the life of the father and mother turns around "Right" as planets around their sun, is in itself the church of churches for young hearts privileged to live in it. Wherever enthusiasm for moral ideals expresses itself in habits of self-forgetting and duty, there is the worship, organized into instinct, of which prayer spoken is but an echo. We must *live* prayer before and after we pray, or there is no prayer. And lived prayer is almost irresistible! The little ones "catch" the family gravitation towards the ideals; and "it is the thing that is caught, not that which is taught, that remains in a child's character." They have a right to expect, as they do, beautiful things of us parents. Whether we will or no, for their first few years we are embodied ideals to them,—what Jesus is in the idealization of Christendom. "Mother, which is the best man,—Washington, or Lincoln, or Jesus, or Father?" asked the small son from under the blankets. Full soon they find us out! Yet long after childhood is over, long after the parents themselves have passed out of sight, a father, a mother, *not* faultless, only "good", may be the invisible Christ in a child, directing his course and making for righteousness and happiness in him. There is comfort and courage in that thought,—"*not* faultless, only good." Yes, first, last, and always. Character is the one only essential; and it is what we parents *are* that counts above everything else for character in our children.

Now for the *No*. Will anything less than the



highest, strongest, most beautiful forms of character in the child content the true parent? If not, the question becomes, Can character attain its heights of beauty and strength without "religious" elements in it? So the question back of all is, What do we mean by "religious"?

Can it be that the Liberal Faith, in emphasizing salvation by character so much as it does, lowers religiousness into morality, instead of exalting morality into religiousness? As I understand the two terms, Morality is consciousness of vital relations with one's *fellow-men*, and of rights and duties rising out of those relations; Religiousness rests on consciousness of vital relations with one's *universe*, whatever that universe be,—that is, however the universe and the relations to it may be conceived by a given mind. Since one's universe, whatever it be, is greater than and includes fellow-men, religiousness is greater than and includes morality. Morality unconscious of this inclusion, unconscious of universe-horizons, may be only "conduct"; at best, is the "*mere* morality" of which we have heard. But morality conscious of those horizons, conscious of something in itself that is universal, eternal, absolute,—morality feeling itself to be law of Nature as well as law of a nation and a street-bargain,—morality thrilling through and through with its own ideals,—rises into, becomes one with, "religiousness". There is a morality non-religious, and a morality religious, then. Both kinds generate character; but the first kind, character in its lower and less secure forms. The last kind alone

can be trusted to produce the high, the enduring, the beautiful forms.

To put this in a more practical way. That word "ideals" gives us a clue. Consider the Soul of a child, how it grows. The secret of the little Soul's growth is *Reverence*. Reverence is to character what the green bark is to the tree, the part where the sap climbs and the new wood is formed. On the outer circle of what we morally *are* lies a rim of reverence for, aspiration towards, all that we are not but *would be*. This is our rim of growth. Here year by year character adds to itself by assimilation of higher moral ideals. In this rim lie especially the finer, more delicate things in us; here is modesty, here is humility and teachableness, here is wide and quick sympathy, here is sensitiveness to justice and mercy, here is the selfless heart, the open mind, the unshadowed sincerity,—“beatitude” qualities all. All are forms of reverence, forms of aspiration. Their very names suggest Springtide in character; and we know how important it is to the tree that the green bark be not girdled, lest the sap in the Spring should fail to run free. This live, sensitive growth-rim secure in a child's character is the best endowment a parent can give him. No college education in worth to life approaches this. Nothing so enlists that child on the side of righteousness, so arms him against the powers of temptation, so enables him to bear greatly and dare greatly, to become what he would be when willing his best, to feel the glory of living and get large values from life,—nothing helps so much to all this as to make him habitually dissat-

isfied with moral attainments any or all, and passionately—not reasonably, but *passionately*—in love with moral ideals. Then enthusiastic reverence for moral ideals we parents *owe* to our children.

I pray you notice these terms,—“reverence”, “ideals”, “enthusiasm”, “passionate love”. They are all terms of “ethics” raised to “religiousness”. Let us vary our definition a little,—though it is to repeat it rather than vary it: Religiousness is the sense of everything in relation to the universe in which it lives and moves and has being (“each in all”): more marvellous yet, it is sense of the universe living, moving, having being in everything (“all in each”)! It is the sense of heavenly horizons in all things, of the Infinite in the infinitesimal! Therefore ethics—as also science and art—is “religious”, or “non-religious”, according to the man. It is a question of depth of insight, of reach of vision, of degree of consciousness and realization. The God is *there*, always there,—but how much do you *see*? There is a trinity called “the True, the Beautiful, the Good.” The “religious” recognition of Truth is a glimpse of the “I AM” in a fact! It is what makes a fact, as fact, holy,—a thing not to be ignored, not to be tampered with, not to be misrepresented by exaggeration or diminution. It is the “Yea, yea: Nay, nay” of Jesus. Such vision as that,—of “*God*” in the *truthfulness* of every word that we speak,—is it not worth while in ourselves, in our children? The “religious” recognition of Beauty sees faces not as features alone, but in haloes of spirit; looking at stars, hears the song of

the stars; fronting life, feels itself fronting not mere experience, but pageant and glory,—what Jesus felt before the weed of the field. Is not vision like this a worth-while for ourselves and our children? The “religious” recognition of Good sees in duty the unwavering choice under every condition; in sin sees the trip, and in virtue the destiny; in Nature sees goodness as substance, and evil as shadow. It is that which transfigures fears into hopes and hopes into faiths, and beyond all failure and tragedy and horror and war discerns victories of Justice and triumphs of Love,—as to Jesus a “Kingdom of heaven” lay forever in view and “at hand”! Does it need days like the present to make insight like this a worth-while for ourselves and our children?

This is “religiousness”, as I understand it. There are other forms, more intense forms, of this “cosmic consciousness”. I have not spoken of the sense of fellowship with Eternal Spirit; nor of our spirit’s actual, dynamic communion with that Spirit, which we call “prayer”; nor of the *wrestle* with that Spirit, —the wonderful “sin” experience, by which most of us find out sooner or later that there is some kind of a God in us; nor of what suffering teaches; and death. These are “the *deep* things of God” in us; not in any few, but in all, of us,—though, again, with that “difference in consciousness” already referred to. I have spoken only of those forms of religiousness which seem but the higher reaches of that “good character” which our humble-minded parent declares is enough for his child. We may



call it "morality", if we prefer, but it is morality aglow with the absolute and eternal elements in its nature; "character", if you will, but it is character attaining its heights of beauty and strength only by virtue of such consciousness. That humble-minded parent is right,—“character is sufficient”; but it must be CHARACTER,—and *that* takes the “religiousness”!

Now unless the homes of the Liberal Faith can awaken “religiousness” in this sense at least,—to say nothing of other senses,—are we not incomplete parents of incomplete children? And can we fail to see that such religiousness can be humanly helped in its growth, just as truthfulness, kindness, purity can be helped in their growth? The faithful parent never thinks of not watchfully training *these* in his child,—training them out of the wild-weed possibilities, that may develop with neglect, into the beautiful flowers of character. James Oppenheim in writing of “gardens and children” says,—

“This garden is a vision of what the human world may be,  
 When we can be as much gods to children  
 As we are gods to flowers:  
 When the joyous mothers can give the years  
 To enriching the soil,  
 And rooting out weeds and poisons,  
 And pruning, and sprinkling, and sheltering,  
 So that the human buds may open  
 Into banks of dancing flowers,  
 Blowing their laughter into the summer air.”

Those banks blowing laughter are the reward that waits to delight mothers and fathers for "giving the years"! Give *not* the years, and the consequence in the garden may easily be blight deforming and stunting the buds of character. So, too, with this finer character, "religiousness". "Give the years" to its culture, and the reward is "flares of its colors, drifts of its fragrance" in children. Give *not* the years, and the result may be only indifference, or it may be that worse thing, *flippancy*, in the children. Indifference, flippancy, before things worthy of reverence, worthy of awe and delight! And this "caught" from the fathers and mothers! Flippancy—pertness before the God-like in things—is a parent's unforgivable sin. One sees now and then a home, not by any means destitute of ideals and noble living, but dark-spotted all over by the irreverent humor which has gradually become the household habit in old and young. Pity for the children reared in that home! And blessed they who grow up in homes where reverence overflows in spontaneous, abundant, unconscious as well as conscious, expression—like the love in it. Grudge not the years to your garden: and trust not your garden to the outsider, the once-a-week Sunday school teacher, however fit for her task she may be. The lily of the field does not become a lily by one-hour, once-a-week spasms of sunshine and shower. No more can the lily of the Home,—the Soul of the child. Enthusiasm for moral ideals, the sense of heavenly horizons in things, the passion for Truth, for Beauty, for Goodness, are the outcome

only of hours and days and years of spiritual influence. Only where the hours and days and years of the child are spent, are they likely to appear. One place alone, the Home, is their natural habitat. *Can* we, the Home-makers, "abdicate"?

### III

#### TWO HOUSEHOLD SHRINES

Can we Home-makers abdicate! Earnestly let us ask, rather, What can we Home-makers do to unfold in its beauty our children's religiousness? A term familiar to old-time reverence, "the Household Altar," reminds us that every true Home is also a Temple. In the Temple of the Home are two shrines,—one where the Mother is seen at the bedside of the Child, one where we hear the Family Thanksgiving. We will visit them both, and then watch what they do in the Temple on Sundays.

It is not for a father to tell mothers about the wonderful intimacies, spirit to spirit, of the children's bed-time hour. On the mother's knee with mother-arms around it, or lying quiet between the smooth sheets, the little body, tired with play, is soon to sink into unconsciousness. The stir of the limbs is over, the senses are shutting like petals; but, if not too tired, between consciousness and unconsciousness there comes a prelude to sleep, a mystical pause like the twilight, which is the Holy of Holies in the child's day. For a little while still the young soul is aware and alert, more aware than during the day. It lies open, sensitive, penitent over its naughtinesses, trusting, loving. Let the mother realize what now is happening: *through her*,



through her mother-love, *her child is nestling Godward!* God is using her as mediator to draw *his* child towards himself! "God could not be everywhere, so he made mothers," said the old Jewish rabbi. *Motherless* is the child, although mothered, who grows up unblest by this moment's sanctities; and *fatherless*, although fathered, the child whose father never claims part in the communion. How quaintly sweet the picture in Francis Thompson's lines!

"Little Jesus, wast thou shy  
Once, and just so small as I?  
Didst thou kneel at night to pray,  
And didst thou join thy hands this way?  
And did thy mother at the night  
Kiss thee, and fold the clothes in right?  
And didst thou feel quite good in bed,  
Kiss'd, and sweet, and thy prayers said?"

Is that picture seen in duplicate at every little bedside? It should be. Still through the years I can hear the very tones of a little boy saying:

"Now I close another day,  
I have quit my work and play,  
And, if I have done my best,  
I shall sweetly sleep and rest.  
I can trust the Loving Care  
That enfolds me everywhere,  
And will keep me pure of heart,  
If I only do my part:  
If I try, I know I may  
Grow in goodness day by day."

The prayer of Jesus—his people's, his own, and now the world's prayer—our children should learn by heart, if only to enter into that time-and-space-wide communion; but the "Our Father who art in heaven" is not a child's prayer. It is the mother's part and privilege to teach her little one a few simple words of thankful trust, to which he will soon be asking to add words of his own. He should feel, as it were, un-kissed and un-kissing, if at night—and before long in the morning, too—his knees forget to bend and his lips to whisper a love-word to the Great Love around him and in him, to whom he owes, mother, father, playmates, home, and all that makes him glad to be alive. That love-word may be more real to him now than later, or than it is—the pity!—to some of us farther on in the years. His habit of home-coming to God at morning and night in after-life will depend much on his having learnt the way and established the habit while his mother still came to the bedside to hear his "Good-night". Much, too, depends on the mother's and father's own custom. The child should never have to discover that prayer is only meant for little children, or that before God their parents ever feel themselves other than little children like himself. Prayer-forms, of course, will change, but prayerless parents will not make prayerful children.

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Coming to the "Family Thanksgiving", let me ask permission to tell you my own experience in two homes, the first one that of my childhood, the

other of the time when I had children myself. [Many besides me are able to look back to "family prayers" in their childhood. Not one of us, probably, has a mere laugh in his heart for the old-home custom. We smile, perhaps, remembering the struggle between the secular and the sacred businesses on those cold winter mornings when we were a little late, and when, had we children voted, it would certainly have been for the buckwheat cakes, or for that last sum left undone over night. Why are we glad now that we could not vote then? Because so many of the best things in the dear old home seem somehow woven in with that quiet household rite, when the Bibles were opened, and we children read our verses round in turn, and then all knelt while Father or Mother said the prayer. Our father's character, the sureness of our mother's love, the dim child-sense of family-oneness, of a common household loyalty, of an Over-Father holding all of us together in his care—memories like these go into our smile, and make us very tender when we think of that pause between the morning greeting and the buckwheat cakes of long ago. And we know better now than we did then the practical economy of that ten minutes' grace before the day; how it made the day begin in calm instead of scamper; how it put the beauty of bright seriousness on the day's work: how, as we went our separate ways, it seemed to be a voice saying, "Remember to *live!*" To wake, to dress, to eat, to hurry off,—it punctuated that quick rush of the morning with a pause which made us think of God, of one another, and of noble living.]

And yet, and yet, the custom came to be outworn; at last it dropped out of our lives. As years went on, the hurry of the day seemed to begin earlier and be more unavoidable: our thoughts about God, about the Bible, about Prayer, changed somewhat; and Father grew old,—and died; and Mother died;—and it dropped out! We do not wish it back. It no longer *fits*. But its memory has steadied us, has blessed us, through the years; and we would not give that memory up for many and many a breakfast now!

That was my old home. Now for my later one, with nearly fifty years between. The “Daily Strength” books, now so common, show how real and wide-spread is the longing for some kind of “household altar” suited to our time. We two had long been in the habit of reading at our breakfast table from such a book, and we loved the habit and the book. The reading began the busy day with a quiet moment of thankfulness and uplift. While the children were very young, they sat silent by our side, feeling, I suppose, that it was a kind of “Good-morning” to God said by all of us together, somewhat like their own little word with him at night. But before they grew old enough to read we wished them to take part with us in this household greeting. We felt that we should fail as parents unless it became dear to them as well as to us; and we wanted the memory of our morning thanksgivings to mingle deeply with their recollections of the old home and their childhood and ourselves. But the words that we elders found on the page for the day were seldom adapted to them. Not that the thoughts

were all too high for our little transcendentalists; but the life-problems dwelt on were often remote from a child's experience, and the forms of expression not in accord with the mind of a child, who needs words short and simple and picturesque. Finding no book quite suited to our purpose, we arranged and printed a small collection of readings, some in prose and some in verse, some drawn from the Bible, more from other sources, and called it "The Little Child at the Breakfast Table." There were but thirty-one readings in all, one for each day of the month. That seemed enough to provide variety, yet not too many to love as they grew familiar. We knew that only by repetition and familiarity do tender associations grow in childhood. "The Bible passages that mean most to me now are those we read over and over in the little book, or in the service at church", said one of our children long afterwards.

This was some twenty years ago. All came about as we hope, and better than our hope. Month after month, year after year, the home-day opened with the little book read at the breakfast table. There were favorites among the selections, but gradually everything became known almost by heart. Our thought had been to provide something for the five to ten-year old period: but by the children's own love and choice it lasted over the edge of their teens, and until, with their help, we began to arrange a somewhat older collection to take its place. As long as they live, I think, they will remember their morning moment that made "God", "Home", and Mother's and Father's love, parts of one thought and



feeling. Can the thought, can the feeling, of God have more beautiful setting and interpretation? With the impress of that moment lasting on in their hearts, I really feel that it makes little difference what their theology, or want of it, becomes. They will have that which underlies and creates noble theology.

The little book was tested in other families than ours, and, a year or two ago, with changes and additions, was reprinted in the hope that a still larger circle of homes might care to try this simple way of giving to the glad re-unions of morning a conscious touch of holiness. In its new form the book is so arranged that the youngest child can take its tiny part with the older ones. There are now other books arranged for children. But better than any stranger's choice, perhaps, may be selections made in the child's own home, just as ours was, by the mother and father themselves. Make your own home-book,—it is not hard; make a new one, perhaps, every year or two, with the children to help. As for the time the little service takes, three minutes, hardly five, suffice. One can not well urge, "We can not spare the time." The truth is, father-in-a-hurry, five earnest moments at the day's beginning, spent in this reverent way with those whom one loves best, are apt to *save* us time along the busy hours; because, love-lighted and Over-lighted so, we are apt to walk a bit more steadily through their duties and temptations.

But if to this you cannot be persuaded,—*besides* this, if you can be,—why not at household meals

keep the "Quiet Moment" that makes the meal "communion" and a "sacrament?" Some one's voice may speak for all a simple word of common thankfulness; but simpler still, and dearer far to many than any spoken "grace", is the custom of joining hands with bowed heads in a little silence of unspoken thanks. It is hard to be indifferent to *that* symbol of mingled tenderness and holiness. The youngest in the circle has a dim cuddling sense of what it means; and if in some hurry we neglect it, it may be the three-year-old who will put out hands to take ours and remind us.

Lovers, about to build new homes of wedded life, while your hopes are high and earnest and tenderness and reverence seem natural, try these "Quiet Moment" ways of facing your ideals together, and thanking the great Source of Love for love like yours! Conscious facing of ideals in a humble, grateful and resolving spirit,—that is "prayer": to do this habitually and "in twos" is to build a "household altar". It will make home safer, dearer, holier, while you are only two. Later, if little brothers and sisters come and cluster round your table, still more, *still more* for their sake keep this way. It will make their childhood sweeter while it lasts, and may make great difference to them in after-life. For the unfolding of the sense of God in your children's hearts the "Quiet Moment" in your home, in which the household love and household reverence become one, day after day, year after year, will have more influence than the Church, and far more than the Sunday school.

Let no one before trial fear an "empty form" in these simple usages. There *are* homes in which they may seem and, if tried, might always seem, but forms, so little in the days would really tune with them. And there are homes in which self-consciousness at first may hinder, even where there is shy welcome for them. But there are also homes, and many, in which it would not *long* seem unnatural to do reverent and tender things together and habitually. The self-consciousness soon passes. "Good-morning" and "Good-night" and bed-time kisses, if always said and always given, are "forms", yet anything but "empty" ones: in most homes they are loved, and, if omitted, missed. A house seems hardly "Home" without some little ritual of tenderness. So with these other ways,—these household rites of reverence, as those are household rites of love. Reverence, after all, is natural to **us**, as natural as love, and is as beautiful a human attitude. When allowed simple expression, it adds to the Home a second grace and charm. It is a charm so great, and now so rare, that strangers within our gates, beholding it, are apt to go away and tell of it as a surprise of beauty!

## IV

### THE DAY BEAUTIFUL IN THE HOME, AND THE DIVINITY SCHOOL HOUR

Let us hope that our children will remember Sunday in the old home as the Day Beautiful of the week. The day that had a pleasant difference from other days in ways of self-restraint and uplift; the day of cleanness, order, quiet, and dear togetherness; the day of days for the ingathering of lonely ones, for communion with beauty in Nature and books, for fellowship one with another on the higher levels of life.

“Holy and peaceful the Day, and the heart sings  
songs; sings the songs of Home and of Love.

Quietly over the earth moves Love;

Silently over the earth falls Peace.

To the hills of the spirit we go!”

Joy to us parents if something like *that* be the feeling our children will have of the Sundays of childhood in retrospect. To what ends of the spirit may this day be dedicated in the Temple of the Home?

First, will they go to the Sunday school, these children of ours? Yes—with an *if*. Yes, if the school have a child-church feeling about it and

the teachers are religious, earnest and loving. Otherwise, possibly not,—so much would we wish only reverence, earnestness, lovingness associated in their child-minds with “religion”. Such schools may be, such teachers are many. If they go, they will go as regularly as to their day-school; and the parents will interest themselves in the lessons, attend the school-sessions now and then, and count their child’s teacher a friend. That teacher will feel herself *thanked!* To the children themselves, seeing it held thus in honor at home, the school will certainly mean more than it often does now.

And will they go, also, to church? I feel sure that they will: they will go, and with us, and will sit by our side in the pew. “Go always?” No: when little, as a treat; then more and more regularly; always, so far as possible with a warm, happy feeling of “togetherness” in the going, such as the lines of Coleridge give:

“To walk together to the kirk  
 With a goodly company;  
 To walk together to the kirk,  
 And all together pray,  
 While each to his great Father bends,  
 Old men, and babes, and loving friends,  
 And youths and maidens gay.”

A story-book will go along for the sermon-time, while the children are small,—to give way by and by to a blank-book and pencil; for the twelve-year-olds will be encouraged to bring home a report of



the sermon, perhaps in some way be rewarded a bit for it. These reports may grow from a few lines to pages in length, if the parents happily co-operate. The device has distinct boy-quieting values, and is educational, also: in college lecture-rooms later the note-books of boys and girls who have learnt in the pew to catch the high lights and the bones of a sermon are apt to be borrowed by benumbed classmates. The children at first will not care for the service and songs. They may, or may not, find something to like in the sermons. They would often not go to church, if they had their own way. Yet something *tells*, and sinks in, and year by year grows in significance; associations form and cluster; at last, perhaps, the church-love begins,—and you *may* have a boy or girl who wants to be a minister! What is it that tells? The complex *whole*: the walk with those one loves through the Sabbath-stilled streets; the sitting in the silence side by side; the wordless fellowship with friends around; the feeling that all are there to have a quiet hour with God between the busy weeks, to face their ideals so often disowned in the week, to quicken self-forgetting and service; a sense of listening to oneself and waiting on the Spirit; and now and then a word out of a sermon like a bugle-call to the young conscience; now and then an old hymn sung by all; now and then, not often, a silent rise of inward song as if a “Holy, holy, holy, God Almighty!” pealed within. It is the complex whole! Is it not worth while? Are there many hours in the child’s life *more* worth while? Of course, this presupposes the parents’

own church-going, and care on their part to make the going, not mere obedience, but gladness to the child. And is not this, too, worth while,—the effort it may cost ourselves to provide such an influence once a week for our children's Souls, to say nothing of our own? Let the father and mother think well before deciding No. And let the father think well before assigning the whole cost over to the mother as his delegate.

Can we utilize the Minister himself in home-ways? Should the grace of God rest richly on him,—and we should want that kind of minister,—indeed we can. For this kind, among other functions and privileges, is ordained to welcome at the gate and fireside intimacies. To the children he is a big brother or an extra-father, according to his age. For the little ones there is a predestined seat upon his knees, with expectation of the story ready for them. Let the grace abide as the years pass on, and he will become to them the trusted outside counsellor, convenient on occasions when the heads of the house are a little contrary and “do not understand.” Every real minister serves at times as father-confessor. When they are older still, no one but he can marry them, or christen their children, or word the Good-byes in the home when Death comes to make it lonely. It is almost the dearest of a minister's rewards to have a family of fifty children whom he thinks of thus as *his*. Ideals associated with his words, his prayers, his personality, his friendship, may be a most real fac-

tor in the family religiousness. *Can* he be utilized? For these things he exists!

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In most homes the Sunday afternoon affords the week's best opportunity for direct religious instruction between parents and children. I say *between*, because it passes both ways. If the term do not affright us, we might call this opportunity the "divinity school hour." Not every Sunday afternoon should hold the hour. What is out-of-doors for? What is a June Sunday for? What are friends for? Was not Sunday called the day of days for the ingathering of lonely, unhomed ones? But while the children remain young, I do mean such an hour three Sundays out of four, if possible,—the Sunday *expectation*, to become their Sunday recollection.

Very early should our children begin to feel that there is something in their parents' faith more important to them than the opinions that are called "beliefs". Gradually they will come to see what the something is,—that it is the way in which the "beliefs" are reached, the spirit in which they are held, the estimate of their importance. For instance, the idea that whatever we "believe" in religion must be true to our own reason and conscience,—not accepted simply because some good person or good book tells us it is true and that we ought to believe it. When older, they will hear this principle called "*Freedom in religion*", in contrast to "tradition" and "authority". And a second idea inter-

locking with this,—that, however widely we differ from another in religious belief, we should try to find some truth and good in the other's belief, and should sympathize with sincerity and loyalty and reverence whether connected with error or truth. It is illuminating to young minds to learn that what we call "error" is almost never sheer untruth, but either "truth" in the bud or else "truth" gone to seed. This spirit of good-will between differing faiths they will by-and-by know as "*Sympathy, or Fellowship, in religion*", in contrast to "dogmatism" and "intolerance" and "sectarianism". The Freedom alone might leave them narrow, dogmatic, intolerant, anything but "liberal",—it often has that effect; but join this spirit with it, and they will have the "open mind" that sees truth's large horizons. Again, the idea that, not what one "believes", but what one *is*, is the test of reality in religion. This they will find is what Liberals mean when they speak of "*Salvation by Character*." And once more, the idea that to share and to serve and to save is the glory of life, and that to save others is the only true way to save oneself. They will be sure to hear much talk about this as "*Social, rather than Personal, Salvation*." Freedom, Fellowship, Character, Service, in Religion,—it would be well to teach the children these words as a slogan to remind them what they must live up to as the *big* things of the Liberal Faith. These things are what make it different in spirit from the older faiths,—or rather, from what the older faiths have been until of late: some more, some less, they all are "liberalizing" now. Not Sunday afternoon alone, but every day

in the week is the day on which to teach, illustrate, *live* to the children these four cardinal principles. To *live* them,—they can not be effectively taught in any other way. These make the “something more important” in religion than “beliefs.”

Yet of course the Liberal Faith, like all other faiths, has its theology,—a quite definite system of beliefs concerning God, Man, his nature and his destiny, Jesus, the Bible, the Church. And right here rises a strange question: Ought we as Liberals to *teach* our children these doctrines of ours? There are a few parents who thoughtfully say, “No: leave the young minds open and unprejudiced;” and not a few who, thoughtlessly and without saying, *act* the No. The result is that many a child born into a liberal home grows up in a dense fog shrouding questions concerning which one may live, if he will, in the sunshine. “I don’t know what I believe, and don’t care that I don’t,—my mind is open,” says such a one sometimes; or, if in some stress of life he does care tremendously, he gropes helplessly. Nor is an open mind at all assured, it is endangered, by this parental method. A young mind “open”, and without “preparedness”, is much exposed to inrushes of error, and doors easily *blow to*, with crudities and superstitions shut fast on the inside. It is indeed important to the Liberal Faith, and it is a high and difficult attainment, to have and to hold the really open mind; so difficult that, as we just saw, it takes the first two of our four cardinal principles in combination to secure it. This being so,



should we let our children chance it, or help them by guidance and practice to make it their sure possession?

And as to the "beliefs" themselves,—amid the bewilderments of life how much those children may be steadied, strengthened, lifted, cheered, by well-grounded conviction of the great, glad truths of our Liberal Faith! For one I would like to *prejudice* my children towards the True, the Beautiful, the Good, as it has been given me to see them. Most carefully will I try to guard in them the open mind; but to refuse on any score to show to them the noblest idea of God in Nature, history, soul, that life has shown to me their parent, and leave the shaping of this supreme, all-glorious idea in their growing minds to the nurse-girl, or to their play-mates, or to the Sunday school teacher, or to the minister himself, would be, I think, the climax of the Great Refusal! True, I would rather they should have a considerably poorer theology than ours with deep religious feeling, than ours without the feeling. Still, instead of fearing to teach them my theology, I should fear *not* to teach it!

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*How* teach it? Let us open the door of our little Sunday afternoon divinity school a crack, and listen! The father and mother are both in there, and the children are gathered around them asking and answering questions, like the boy in the Temple. They are talking about "*God*". It is free and easy and playful, but earnest, talk. Long ago

the two "professors" learnt to say in reply to child-questions, "We don't know": the children are used to that, and all the more believe in them! In this divinity school hour the two are even more careful than usual to disclaim omniscience. They are using much picture and parable language in their talk, and we hear them now and then saying, "It is not just *this*, but *like* this, we think; by and by we may understand better about it." They know well that Nature makes all children poets, and that their small students have to do their thinking in concretes. They know also that the "poet" is one to whom a fact is a *symbol* as well as a fact, and that part of Nature's intent with the children is that through their concretes they should reach larger meanings beyond; and they want to help Nature a bit in this part of her process. To use the pictures of God that rise in the mind of the child in such a way as to suggest their enlargement and ennoblement, is their endeavor. So the theology lesson itself is becoming an object-lesson in open-mindedness. Their hope is that, as the children grow up, the poet in them will not disfellowship the agnostic, nor the agnostic the poet. But little our youngsters know of the pedagogics applied to them! What "God" really *means* they are learning from something in the mother's face and the father's tones much more than from anything said. Already the older ones, by "catching," are coming to speak that name with a pause and hush, like an unconscious obeisance; and the other, his home-name, "Our Father" begins to waken the look that hovers in eyes that are gazing at beauty. Gradually "God", thus interpreted by and through

parents, is becoming to them the *Motherliness of things*,—a boundless, mysterious Reality of Goodness and Love. If the parents succeed, the mystical meaning of that Reality will keep on widening and deepening, until He—much nearer as pronoun is “He” than “It” to the truth—is to these children the Living and Loving Unity of All Ideals: and with that their teachers will contentedly graduate them from the Home divinity school.

Perhaps through the crack we may hear one of the children ask, “You often speak of the *Soul*,—what is that?” and our two professors—who know!—are answering somewhat like this: “It is that in you, dear, which thinks and loves and tells you to do right, and makes your little verse come true,—‘If I try, I know I may *grow* in goodness day by day.’ It is the *you* that we don’t see who lives in your body that we do see: you *are* Soul, and you *have* this body for a while. That body of yours, so wonderfully made, is a child of the Earth, like the flowers and the trees and the snow-flakes and stars, and all the other things that you *see*; they are its brothers and sisters,—how beautiful they all are! And wherever beauty is, there God is: beauty is his reflection in things. But your Soul is more wonderful and beautiful still: it is more closely related to God, more like himself. He is the Father, and the Soul is the Child,—and father and children are *like* each other, you know. You cannot help loving him and wanting to be more and more like him. All the people all over the earth are *Souls*: whether their faces are white or black or yellow or red, they are Souls, and all are his children. There is One Father,

and all Souls are brothers and sisters. It is like a great Family; and, of course, in a family we should all love and help one another."

"And what, when we *die*?" one of the children may ask. The wise two will answer: "When we die, everything seems to go home. This body of ours goes back to its mother, the Earth,—back to the flowers and trees, its brothers and sisters; and the unseen Soul that is *you* finds a new home with the unseen Father of All. All that we take with us then will be what we *are*: what we *are*,—so let us be good. But until we ourselves go, we know very little about the new home, and cannot imagine what our new 'body' will be; but if we make good use of our earth-life, we think we shall be stronger, better, more beautiful Souls there than here. Though we know so little, we feel very sure that all will be well with us there, because God is good. When you came here, you found a mother and father waiting, you know."

"What, tell them all that in a Sunday afternoon?" you ask. No, dear listener: not in one, but in many Sunday afternoons, and with many illustrations and variations as the little ones grow from their digits into the teens. "But is that plain enough,—will they understand and be satisfied?" I think so; try it and see. Not satisfied to the point of ceasing to ask questions, we hope. The truth is, it is easier for them to be transcendentalists than for you and me. "But you said that God made them poets, thinking in concretes." Yes, *poets*; and that "poets" are those whose eyes see *through* a fact to meanings *beyond*, of which it is symbol. Be not afraid,—the

children will meet us half-way. They may understand what we mean better than we do! The important thing is not to give them a definite picture,—they will take care of that themselves,—but *how much can we make them trust in Goodness?* so that their pictures, as they rise in them and change, shall always reflect that trust. Trust in Goodness is what a mother and father ought to be able to give.

This may hint the kind of theology and psychology and sociology and eschatology, that some of us who, as the children think, know so much, would fear *not* to teach in the little Sunday afternoon divinity school of our Home. To teach very humbly,—while all through the long teaching the emphasis would be less on the “doctrine” than on the open mind and the loving heart and the supremacy of character and the duty and beauty of service.

What shall we teach about *Jesus* in the Homes of the Liberal Faith? Some of us one thought, and some quite another, according to temperament and upbringing; yet central reverence will be common to all the thoughts. All earnest fathers and mothers will want their children to know well the story of him who kept his will one with his “Father’s” will, who brothered the outcasts and sinners, who spoke such words as are stored in the Sermon on the Mount and the Parables, and perhaps in the Gospel of John, and who needed but two years from his baptism in Jordan to reach his cross by the walls of Jerusalem. Some of us, with Emerson, will speak of this life to their children as the example of “one man



true to what is in you and me." Others, versed in the psychology and history of religion, will call him the shining example in history of "idealization", one among many examples of it but to us highest of all, and as such for us the best symbol of God's life in man's. Still others, these in Liberal Orthodox homes, will teach a far closer intimacy,—love for an "Eternal Christ", a personal "Emmanuel", a mystical Companion trysting within them. We all believe in the "Our Father" within us to whom we pray,—that Comrade is He, identified by these friends with him of the Gospel story. Sooner or later all these ideas, and others, will be freely talked over with the children. Whatever the parents' own thought may be,—and very likely it will differ between the two,—to the healthy boys of the family Jesus will probably seem in the class with Washington and Lincoln, but a more shadowy figure, more hidden in halo. Unless the eagle as well as the dove-side of Jesus, the hero as well as the saint, be emphasized to them, he will probably not be a strong personal influence to them during their childhood; but such a book as Fosdick's "Manhood of the Master," arranged for short daily readings, may make him a real friend by the time they are seniors in college. To the girls he might earlier seem like a mystical brother, noble and beautiful. When they hear of a deed of pure selflessness, they may think, "That is like *him!*"

As for the *Bible*, these children will have little need to go to Sunday school to learn Bible stories, for they will know the stories from the least to the great-

est of them—barring the meaner and bloodier ones,—know them by our reading and telling and their re-telling to us, and by frank, happy conversations about them. At first it will probably seem to them a wonderful story-book about some good men and more bad men and a God who is very like *both*; much of it correlating with legends and fairy-tales in their other “Heart of Oak” books. It ought to seem so to them, because it *is* so. Gradually they will come to see that the stories make up one long story of a child-people in far-away time, who through the mistakes and wrong-doings and punishing calamities of a thousand years, learnt—*this* in chief: that the God whom it thought of at first as just its own little God was really the One Only God of all the people on earth; and who, instead of being arbitrary and cruel, was really the Holy One, the All-Righteous, the Loving Father in Heaven, whose will it was that men should be righteous and loving like himself. They would come to see, too, that this long story of evolution in religion was simply the national literature, written by the people themselves, book by book, through the centuries,—books some of law, some of history, some of maxims and hymns and poetry, some of fiery sermons, some of letters full of doctrinal argument, some of anecdotes and biography. Trained to think thus of the Bible at Home, and without having this training upset and reversed, as it so often is, in a Sunday school, two things will *not* happen to our children, and a third *may*. It will never occur to them that what the Old Testament calls “holy” we are therefore to think holy in our time and our Home; nor will English

literature be pitted all over with holes of blank meaning to them, because they do not recognize the Bible allusions with which it is strewn. But result best of all if it come, with this training they will be likely to know where the "Bible Heights" lie; and in after-life may love to resort to them,—just as they love and resort to the mountains of New Hampshire because of the summer tramps in their childhood. It is one of the tragedies of "culture" to throw the Bible aside like an out-grown school-book. If the parent professors in the divinity school are wise, they will see to it that the students, before the afternoon sessions are over, have fast in memory, to take out with them into life, at least a hundred of the great Bible verses, a score of the splendid passages,—and the complete list of the sixty-six books recitable like the multiplication-table, so that they can find their way round in the Bible forever: the knowledge of these, and of a few noble hymns—for happy the homes where the Sunday evenings bring family song—to entitle to the graduation diploma!

It is still a common idea that the Liberal Faith has a few *non*-beliefs which it greatly emphasizes, but no beliefs for which it much cares. One way to correct this mistake is for every Liberal to be able to tell promptly and clearly what our beliefs are. In these hints for the Sunday afternoon talks with the children we have at least touched on the four thoughts which Charles Ames compressed into his widely used basis of church organization, and the five points in the statement of Unitarian beliefs

by James Freeman Clarke. "In the freedom of truth and in the spirit of Jesus Christ we unite for the worship of God and the service of man." "We believe in the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of Man, the Leadership of Jesus, Salvation by Character, and the Progress of Mankind onward and upward forever." These two short formulas, with that of the "Four Principles", it is well to memorize. Such things are our "flags". If we carry them with us, we become to that extent missionaries and interpreters of the Liberal Faith. None of our critics will call those "Five Beliefs", or those "Four Principles", trifles. Many will call them noble, important, and what they, too, believe. If so, so much the better. Teach the children our "flags", and what they mean! Taught in our way, with the "Principles" paramount, there need be no slightest fear of "credal" danger.

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A long pleading! Do you say these are only dream-children of whom I have talked so long, and this a dream-home? I say, No; it is a picture, not of the easy, but of the well worth while and the largely possible,—*when parents are pledged to their parenthood*. It is the picture of a Home in which the parents have *not* made the "Great Refusal": of a Home in which the father and mother, who invited the birth of a child and who rejoice before God for the gift, have accepted responsibility for the spiritual upbringing of the little Soul—God's child and theirs.

—and with conscious aim and persistent plan have done their humble and faithful best.

One thing I know. In any Home where household reverence is naturalized in such ways as I have tried to picture, the children, as they grow old, will thank and bless us parents. They may come to smile at the old forms and themselves discard their use,—none the less they will thank and bless us. Those household rites at meal-time, that prayer at the mother's knee, the child's first altar, that Sunday with something a little solemn in its very pleasantness, the church-going together through the quiet streets and to the quiet place, the confidences of the Sunday afternoon,—all this will mingle with their very tenderest memories, their proudest and most grateful memories, of us. They will forget our rebukes, they will forget our praises; they will forget a thousand sacrifices and patiences of ours in their behalf; but about the last thing they will forget will be the way in which we used to try to make "God" real and near and dear to them in the old Home of their childhood.

"My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Through all let us remember that we, parents of children, are fellow-workers with God in this business beautiful. If that thought humble, it can inspire us also and give courage for the holy task.

Co-workers we with Him! Were He to ask,  
 "Come, star with me the spaces of my night,  
 Or light with me tomorrow's sunset glow,  
 Or fashion forth the crystals of my snow,  
 Or teach my sweet June roses next to blow,"—



O rare beatitude! But holier task,  
 Of all his works of beauty fairest-high,  
 Is that He keeps for hands like ours to ply!  
 When He upgathers all his elements,  
 The Mighty Gardener of the earth and sky,  
 His days, his nights, whole æons of his June,  
 That to achieve toward which the ages roll,  
 We hear the Voice that sets the spheres a-tune—  
 "Help me, my comrades, flower this little Soul!"

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A word by way of postscript. Much is said in these days about the decline of the Church, and reasons many are given for it. Of the sunset of religiousness in the Home, and its cause, the parent's abdication in the religious upbringing of the child, little has been said. Yet of all the reasons for the decline of the Church this, perhaps, is chief. For the Home is the unit of churches; and the religiousness of a community is measured more by the religiousness of its Homes than by that expressed in its churches. If in the Homes during six days of the week there be little conscious thought and enjoyment of God, how *can* there be much thought and enjoyment of him on the seventh day in the church? Under such conditions will many care to go to church? or will many young men be attracted to its ministry? Under such conditions what should we look for in the Church but decline? What else

can it do but decline?, If the sources in the hills go dry, can the stream in the valley run full?

I commend this sequence to the earnest consideration of those who love the Liberal Faith:

Has our Liberal Faith no room for a Household Altar?

If not, what becomes of our Children's Religiousness?

Without that, what will become of the Liberal Church?

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